

FOOD AND NUTRITION

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ing of the treaty with Nanking on November 30, 1940, it was announced that high Japanese military authorities in Nanking had agreed that, subject to meeting the needs of the army and with certain other reservations, rice collection should be a function of the Chinese authorities. Actually little Chinese rice was made available to Shanghai. 262 438 722

There were ample stocks of rice in Burma, but there were no ships to bring it to Shanghai. This was well known, not only to rice dealers in Shanghai, but to the general public. Therefore, despite the presence of a large reserve supply in the warehouses of the city, the retail price of rice rose at an accelerating rate until in May 1941, as a result of private profiteering and public fear, it reached the till then unprecedented height of \$145 per *shih*. 435 262

It can readily be understood that with such difficulties in feeding the Settlement, major emphasis had to be placed on ensuring supplies. Even though high prices were undesirable, it was important that there should be supply at any price. Rice riots have occurred more than once since 1937. 262 579

The distressing effects of high prices were illustrated by the practice of "rice sweeping" (and, indeed, the snatching of other commodities such as raw cotton) which became a frequent sight in the city as a consequence of the rising prices. When a truckload of rice halted at a traffic intersection, a dozen waifs, adult and adolescent, appeared from nowhere, moving like lightning. In a twinkling one or more rice bags were pierced with knives, and as the precious grain began to run out, it was scooped swiftly with the dust of the roadway into a receptacle. The "sweeper" would often disappear before any police could act. But if caught, he or she appeared next morning in the First Special District Court, that busy court which dealt with an average of 10,000 cases each month. Detention followed; but the need that prompted the snatching remain unfilled. 685 262 435

ALTHOUGH IN THE CRISIS of 1937 the Shanghai Municipal Council had intervened to bring rice to Shanghai, it had no desire to interfere with the normal trade in rice unless forced by circumstances to do so. When faced with the crisis in March 1941, therefore, the Council decided that it would charter ships, possibly with the assistance of the British Admiralty. Space could then be sold to rice importers. At the end of March the Council announced this intention and appointed a special committee of businessmen under 633 438 262